

VIRTUOUS WOMEN

Part One

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Lesson - 1

HAZRAT HAJIRA

Allah has created everything in this world. He is the Master of all. The creator provides sustenance to all and supplies everything needed. So all upright persons rely on Him. They call Him in times of need and seek His help alone. Almighty Allah is pleased with all such men and women and rise their status.

Among such virtuous ladies who were elevated is included Hazrat Hajira Alai his-salaam . She was the wife of Hazrat Ibrahim . Hazrat Ismail was born to her. Hazrat Ismail was still in his infancy that Allah wanted to build the land surrounding what is now called Makka Mo'azzama. At that time the whole area was a forest and the holy Ka'aba had not been constructed. God had ordained Prophet Ibrahim to leave Hazrat Ismail and his mother at that spot. "We are their Protector," He said.

Hazrat Ibrahim was a very obedient servant of Allah. How could Hazrat Ibrahim refuse the order that he should leave the mother and the son in this solitary place. This is the difference between an obedient and a disobedient person. The intelligent person understands the wish of his master and acts accordingly. He bows his head before the orders even when he has to undergo heavy loss and gives up all gains which are considered unwanted by the master. But the disobedient person always thinks of his profits only. He never cares for the wishes and approval of his Master. He will think of his own comforts and pleasures. Hazrat Ibrahim was an obedient person. The main aim of his life was nothing but pleasure of Allah. He wanted to live only for obeying and serving Allah.

So, as soon as he got the orders he proceeded towards the Barren Land along with his wife and son. There was no man or any other kind of life. Reaching the place he kept the leather container full of water and a bag full of dates besides the two individuals and started to return. Hazrat Hajira asked: "Are you

leaving us here alone?" Hazrat Ibrahim did not reply. She asked again: "Has God ordained you to do so?"

"Yes", said Hazrat Ibrahim.

Thereupon she commented: "Then there is no worry. He will look after us." She sat down contented.

How trustworthy was the move! In this wild calmness of the jungle where there was no sign of any human being, a woman living alone with an infant baby was certainly a nightmarish experience!

It was really a Herculean feat and proves how determined and enduring was Hazrat Hajira! She was not afraid of anyone other than Allah, who was her strength because she fully well knew that Allah is not unaware of his creations. He keeps a watch and looks after them every instant, every second and everywhere — be one in a vast and lonely desert land or in a thickly populated area. When He is present everywhere (omnipresent), when He is caretaker of everyone, and when he was providing sustenance while in thickly populated town, how could He forget me! This was a strong consoling factor that made her leave off all fears and rely on His Omnipotency!

Many days passed. Poor Hajira would take out dates from the bag whenever she was hungry and would drink water from the water bag. As each day passed the quantity of water got reduced and a day came when there was no water left. Now as days passed, the need for water was felt badly. Hazrat Ismail was a mere infant being fed on milk. There was no water and so there was no milk. No food and no water for days together. The throat was parched because of thirst. The child started to quiver and cry. The mother could not tolerate the pangs and trouble of the baby. She left the baby alone and ran in search of water. She climbed the nearby Safa mountain and looked around for water. There was none. She climbed down this mountain and climbed up the other mountain (Marwa) and looked around. There was no sign of water anywhere. In her restlessness she went up and down the two hillocks several times. In between she used to return to the baby who was rubbing the ground with his tiny heels. This was the

most trying time! One could well imagine the condition of a helpless mother and a thirst-stricken child. The mercy of Allah was awoken – and lo! water gushed out of a spring at the very place where the child was rubbing the ground with his heels. When Hazrat Hajira returned this time to see the condition of the baby, she was wonderstruck and overjoyed to see the gushing water. She thanked the All-Powerful Provider and quenched the thirst of the child and then drank water herself. How sweet was the fruit of endurance and gratitude!

After a few days a caravan passed by. They saw the spring and so they broke their journey. They stayed there. They paid their homage to both the mother and the son because of whom alone they could get water in this scorching desert land. A colony was soon developed. Then one day Hazrat Ibrahim visited the place on instructions from God. He was astounded to find habitation. The place was alive and bustling with life. The son had grown up into a young lad. He was very happy at the turn of events. The son now joined the father in building a house for Allah and asked the people to come to pray the Almighty there. From that time to this day people pour in continuously to offer prayer to the one and only God, who is All Powerful. Muslims all over the world offer their prayers facing towards this first house of Allah. They throng the place during the Haj pilgrimage season. They run over the hillocks between which Hazrat Hajira had run up and down in search of water. Allah has approved of this action to the extent that He made it acceptable till Doomsday. This was because Hazrat Hajira had trusted Allah fully and wholeheartedly. She had accepted the verdict of Allah implicitly and without questioning. When she learnt that it was the wish and order of Allah she was in such ecstatic condition that she did not even inquire Hazrat Ibrahim when he would visit them next, what arrangement had been made for providing food, how long they had to stay at this lonely place, how life had to be faced at a place where there was neither roof above nor doors and walls around, nor anyone either to converse with or to share the joys and sorrows of life! Just she heard that it was the will of Allah and she accepted it without even a murmur. She commenced

living in this isolated place all alone. This is called Faith or Iman
and this action is called reliance on Allah!

Lesson - 2

HAZRAT ASIYA

Allah has bestowed an elevated status to man. He has made man his vicegerent (*Khalifa*). He has endowed man with wisdom and discriminating power. He has ordained that man should not worship anyone other than Him, should not bow before any power — great or small, other than God. But Satan who always follows man makes him do worst activities and degrades man on the Day of Judgement. Even then people who are pious and noble would not be trapped by him. They would not digress from the path of truth even in the hardest of times. There is no distinction between man and woman in this respect. In the path of religion women have walked shoulder to shoulder with men.

One such woman was Hazrat Asiya who was the spouse of Pharaoh. She has been praised in the Holy Qur'an also. She suffered great hardships for the sake of upholding truth and never took leave of the straight path. She accepted to lay down her life at the hands of the executioner rather than yielding to the favours of Pharaoh.

Pharaoh was a tyrant who had revolted against Allah. In his stupidity he claimed to be the God and had ordered that people should accept him as their Lord, worship him, prostrate before him and obey him. What an ugly claim! Being a man he was proclaiming himself to be God — a servant was venturing to become a master! An ordinary person who is weak and mean was dreaming of divine supremacy. What else can be more degrading? If Almighty God wanted, Pharaoh would have been crushed but God did not do it. Instead he sent Moses to reform him and to bring him back to the straight path, but Pharaoh was proud and blind. He never cared about the persuasions of Moses and continued to revolt against the Almighty Allah and to spread evil.

However his spouse Asiya was a pious lady. She believed in the faith brought by Moses and continued to spread good and

curb evil. When Pharaoh learnt of this conversion, he was red with rage because Asiya was his wife. He believed that the wife should accept what the husband practised, irrespective of whether it was good or bad, and whether permissible or not. "When my people were accepting whatever I ordered without giving any second thought, my wife should also do the same." But since it was a question of Faith, Hazrat Asiya flatly refused to accede to his claim, disregarded his wrongful activities and when he charged her to have gone mad, she retorted:

"O Pharaoh! I am not mad. I am one who believes in that God who is the master of earth and sky, who is single and who has no companion, and O Pharaoh He is your God also."

This infuriated the tyrant and oppressor Pharaoh. He tore her clothes, thrashed her and then calling her relatives asked them to persuade Asiya to accept Pharaoh as God. The relatives explained to her thus: "Why have you turned yourself as your own enemy? Pharaoh (God forbid) is God and a great emperor. The whole world bows before him, obeys him, he can do anything in a fraction of a second. It is not proper to disobey him."

But Hazrat Asiya did not fear Pharaoh. She feared only Allah. She cared about the other world than this world. She feared the tortures of Hell against the transitory comforts and pleasures of this life. She knew very well that this is only a transitory life. The real life starts only after death. The success in Hereafter is the real success. If the world is displeased, man does not lose anything. He had only to face death. But when Allah is displeased, the life ends into permanent disgrace. So she addressed her relatives thus:

"My dear relatives, what you have suggested is the outcome of the love you possess for me. You are my well-wishers but what you say is wrong. Pharaoh is as weak, helpless and humble as we are all. He is making a false claim of his being Divine. The creator of the universe is actually Allah. He has created everything. He is the Master of all things. We are all his servants. I accept Him only as my God. Even if Pharaoh gets me a crown that has the sun in the front portion, the moon at its back and the stars in the centre, I will never stop praying the real God because He

alone is God and Pharaoh is a liar!"

This talk infuriated Pharaoh. He called the executioners and ordered them to nail her down. This was not an ordinary punishment. To make one lie down flat by nailing the hands and legs is the brutal action. It is no joke. A delicate and sensitive woman who had not set her feet down satin cushions etc., to bear the atrocities of the executioners. This was no ordinary joke. Bibi Asiya had no idea about it. The executioners made her lie down on the ground on her back and hammered down nails in both hands and feet and then placed a tray with red hot embers on the chest. Pharaoh addressed her now: "I will punish you more severely. Just give up the God of Moses." Perhaps he was thinking that she was after all a woman, and this much torture would perturb her and she would agree to whatever he demanded. He forgot that whoever was intoxicated with Allah's love would not care for material losses or hardships. One who longed for his Master's pleasure would not care about the punishments of this world. One who craves for the genuine grace, will gladly embrace the gallows.

The faithful shirk not laying down life

Ere the gallows stare in their eyes!

Her retort was classic. She said: "O Pharaoh! To whatever extent you go, my love for Allah will not diminish, even if, you cut me into pieces, my binding love for the God will be enhanced for every drop of blood I shed and my faith will raise to its zenith!"

How heart-rending was this scene! Blood was oozing out of hands and feet! The breast held the tray of scorching flames on the surface but the flames of love were rising to skies inside the bosom. It was devoted adherence! The bystanders were shuddering! But there was not a single sigh of repentance or grief or a plea for mercy! The endurance incarnate laid its gory frame in crimson robes at the feet of that Supreme Authority to whom she bore allegiance single-mindedly!

Inna Lillahi wa inna ilaihi Raji'oon.

Lesson - 3

UMMUL MOMINEEN HAZRAT KHADIJATUL KUBRA

The lamp is lit up. Darkness flees. Light spreads. The roads get lighted up. So do the lives of noble, pious and good people serve the multitude. Their achievements, their quotes show the path for the successors. The life of Hazrat Khadijatul Kubra is also like a lamp that was lit at the commencement of Islam and continued to brighten the path ever since.

She was the first spouse and the best companion of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). She was also the first to believe in his prophethood.

She was born to Khoovailid at Makkah 68 years earlier to the commencement of Hijri calendar. Her father was the most flourishing merchant and a popular figure of Hejaz and Arabia. Hazrat Khadija had been brought up very lovingly. She was married to an aristocrat who did not survive long. After sometime even her father expired and she had to look after his vast business.

These were the times when Hazrat Muhammad had attained youth and was accompanying his uncle Abu Talib on business tours. He had also attained a name for integrity and honesty in his dealings. When Hazrat Khadija heard about his ability and integrity, she sent word to him through his uncle for carrying her merchandise also to other places for disposal. He agreed after his uncle gave the consent and carried her merchandise on his next trip. By God's grace, all her goods were sold at Basra alone at twice the price and he returned to Makkah. She was much impressed and pleased with his honest dealing and double profits. Her servant Maisarah had accompanied him on the trip. Maisarah described to her the various happenings of the tour. They created a healthy, impressionable image of the person. She decided to marry him. She sent the proposal to his uncle.

Hazrat Khadija was nearing forty years at the time while Hazrat

Muhammad was in his 25th year. The uncle first hesitated because of the difference in age. However considering that Hazrat Khadija is a very noble and chaste woman, he gave his acceptance for the proposal and Hazrat Muhammad was married to her. He had not married anyone earlier. So Hazrat Khadija enjoyed the privilege of being his first wife, and he did not marry anyone else as long as she was alive. Bibi Khadija was a very noble and honourable lady from the beginning and she was an admirer of his adorable qualities and was fully aware of his status. So she was always ready to serve him utmost. When Hazrat Muhammad proposed that he wanted to meditate in seclusion and for that he had chosen a cave in the Faran mountain, she readily gave her consent saying that he could fulfill his desire and that she would be arranging for his food and other needs while at that place. This was despite the fact that she was a rich woman, commanding respect and prestige, and by such a move her business would be affected. As a devoted and loyal wife, she arranged for reaching the food regularly at the cave and saw that he was not discomforted anyway.

When the first revelation came to him, Muhammad could reach home in a disturbed condition and called for his devoted wife. She came running, saw his condition, covered him with a blanket and enquired about his health in a low tone. The Prophet (pbuh) described everything that took place at Hira Cave, adding: "Perhaps, my time has come." But Bibi Khadija consoled him graciously: "Please do not panic. Allah will not destroy you because you help the poor and the needy, assist those in tight corners; always speak truth and are very hospitable."

These consolatory words cheered him and provided internal strength to overcome the fear. By offering the moral support, she fulfilled the obligations of being the companion for life. A few days later when the Prophet started propagation of the religion, the credit of embracing the religion first goes to her alone. To believe in and to accept the new Faith at its inception was no ordinary feat. People were wedded to age-old traditions which were quite difficult to be given up. Certain practices and rituals were close to their heart. It was almost impossible to give up

those practices. It was certainly the good intention of Bibi Khadija that she responded to the call of Truth automatically and then invested her whole wealth in the cause of propagation of Islam. She stood by the side of her revered husband till her last breath. Whenever he felt uneasy due to adverse remarks or actions of the non-believers he would seek relief in the consoling words of Hazrat Khadija . At times when there was need for funds, she would immediately extend her helping hand without even giving any thought to her coffer becoming empty or that the missionary work of the Prophet was causing adverse effect on her business at all. For this sincerity of purpose and exemplary love, the Prophet continued to praise her even after her demise.

Once during a meeting there was a reference to the sacred spouses of the Prophet. When the name of Hazrat Khadija was mentioned, with tearful eyes the Prophet commented: "There is no comparison. Khadija acknowledged me when everyone was rejecting me. She sacrificed all her assets for the cause of Allah and supported Islam." Unconditional devotion is confirmed by the following incident.

She was on the death-bed. She was losing and regaining consciousness. At that critical moment one of her childhood friends by name Atam called on her. She was the wife of an aristocrat. She first enquired about the health and then in a sympathetic tone added: "Khadija! we feel for you for the manner you are breathing your last. There is no one to put water in your mouth. Of course you have corrupted your present but by giving up the religion of your ancestors you are spoiling your Hereafter also. We considered you as the most respectable and distinguished member of the clan. But as you embraced the new religion, you have forfeited all these honours. Your business also has failed. No one cares for you. Listen to me, dear, give up the new bonds. Come back to your old faith. This new faith belongs only to menials and low caste people. Your last time has come. If you forsake it before me, I assure, your coffin will be carried with all pomp and pageantry. Do accept my proposal. Yes, be merciful on your infant child. Otherwise no one will care for her."

When Khadija heard all this talk of Atam, although the tongue

was not in her control, she got up and sat in the bed. How could she be silent when it concerned the Faith she was professing. She replied: "You are talking of this child. I have learnt from the Prophet of Allah that she is the best woman of the world. She will be mentioned honourably and reverentially till Doomsday. And now about me. This condition of mine is the most comfortable one. What if I have given up the worldly wealth for the sake of Islam? My Allah has bestowed on me the most valuable riches – the religion of Islam. All the treasures of the world are nothing before it. You feel that I am dying empty handed. How I wish you had realized the richness of treasures I carry with me. The worldly hoardings are transitory. It will remain here alone. But the richness of the Faith go along with the deceased and comes handy on the resurrection day." Then she added:

"My dear friend, you are ignorant. You are my childhood friend. I do not wish that on the resurrection day when everyone is accounted for, you stand ashamed and thrown into the Hell. I invite you to put your faith in Allah, who is incomparable and who is only worth worshipping. He is most Merciful and most Beneficent. He only possesses all energies and powers, he is flawless, he is great, he is powerful, he fulfills all needs and he is the fortune maker. Everything in the whole universe belongs to Him. There is none other than Him before whom we can bow our head.

"O my bosom friend, you put faith in the Prophet whose prophethood is positive and unquestionable. The trees and stones confirm his prophethood. The Bible and the Psalms have predicted his appearance. He was referred as *Ameen* and *Sadiq* and was considered most chaste and true. Even now he is most true and well-behaved. He is disseminating the Message of One God.

"Atam! I gave up atheistic beliefs and believed in the Oneness of Allah. I put my faith in the prophethood of the true Prophet. I was born empty-handed and am now enriched with the riches of Faith and am proceeding to meet my creator full-handed. You are to die one day. Look, you already have gray hair, youthful grace is diminishing, wrinkles are appearing, the last destination is approaching. This is the crucial moment. You have to think of

it. So you offer penitence and put faith in Allah and His apostle.”

This long talk made Ummul Momineen breathless. She fell down on the bed. The friend was very much influenced by this talk and embraced Islam instantly.

Lesson - 4

UMMUL MOMINEEN HAZRAT AYESHA

Hazrat Ayesha was the second wife of Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) and the dear daughter of Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique. Hence she is referred to as Siddiqah. She was quite intelligent and obedient since childhood alone. As you know Hazrat Abu Bakr was a very pious and dedicated follower of Islam. It is the parentage and the healthy environment that had made her well-natured. She further flowered in the company of the Prophet.

It is recorded that after the demise of Hazrat Khadija, the Prophet was in pensive moods. This made the companions bold to send Khaula Bint Hakeem to the Prophet who suggested thus: "O Prophet, why do you not perform a second marriage. That will pacify your sorrows. Your companions are also of the same opinion." The Prophet (pbuh) said: "As you all wish."

When the consent of the Prophet was got Khaula bint Hakeem went to the house of Hazrat Siddique Akbar and proposed Hazrat Ayesha for Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), Hazrat Abu Bakr very readily consented. And the nikah was performed the next day.

The nikah ceremony was quite a simple affair. There was no procession, no pageantry, no display, no tunes and music. The mahar (dower) was a meager amount. It was merely 500 Dirhams (equivalent to about Rs. 100/ of the present day.) This was to set an example in performing marriages. It should be a plain and neat ceremony without any display of pomp and wealth. The farewell of the bride to the husband's house took place three years later. At that time, she was ten year old. Despite the young age she could read the mind and moods of people easily. She was very obedient and looked after the husband very devotedly. The Prophet also loved her much. It was usual for the Prophet to speak about Islam everywhere and every time and the people present around him at the time would learn and share the

knowledge with others. Hazrat Ayesha got the opportunity of enjoying such moments of nearness to the maximum extent. Hence she heard him most and observed his actions most. She had very good memory too. So she memorized a large number of traditions (Hadith). She occupies a prominent place among the Huffaz-e-Hadith i.e., those who had memorized the Hadith. She was 18 years old at the time of the demise of the holy Prophet. This is the age when most of the women would not have any sense of their responsibilities. They would spend most of their time in their make-up alone. They indulge in vague chit chatting. They neither will have any knowledge of religion nor will have any training in worldly matters. Unlike them Hazrat Ayesha enjoyed quite a distinct and distinguished status. She was devoted to prayers to the extent that she offered even *chaasht* prayer without missing it any day. She would get up during nights and offer *Tahajjud* prayers along with the Prophet. This practice continued even after the demise of the Prophet. She was very particular in offering *Tarawih* prayer during Ramadhan. She fasted often and performed Haj every year.

She was very contented and self-dependent. Generosity was her quality.

One day she was mending her torn shirt when Hazrat Mu'avia sent one lakh Dinar to her. She asked her maid servant to distribute the money among the poor and needy persons. Accordingly in no time the money was distributed to the last penny. At the conclusion, the maid servant remarked: "O Ummul Momineen, you were fasting and you have not purchased the gravy of even a dirham (1/100 part of Dinar). She said: "You are telling me when no money is left."

One day a beggar came to her. She asked the maid servant to feed him. When she was taking the food, Hazrat Ayesha called the maid to check whether there was sufficient quantity. The Prophet (pbuh) remarked: "O Ayesha, you must not keep account of all these things lest God takes their account." She replied: "By God, Ya Rasoolullah, that was not my intention." (*Musnad Ahmed*)

Once a *chaadar* (sheet of cloth) of Ummul Momineen was stolen. She started cursing the thief. The Prophet heard it and

said: "O Ayesha, do not have his burden on your head."

This means by her cursing, that person would become worse and evil would spread far and wide. This indicates that by cursing others, one would be harming oneself alone.

Hazrat Ayesha has said that whenever the holy Prophet took oath from women, he would commence the oath with "You must not associate anyone else with Allah." (*Musnad Ahmed*)

She said: "I have heard the holy Prophet as saying that the best thing you would consume is that which you have earned by your own effort, through permissible means and practices and there is no doubt that your children are also your earnings." (*Tirmizi*)

Said she: "I asked the Messenger of Allah: I have two neighbours. Whom shall I send the present?' He replied: 'To the one whose door is nearer to yours'."

She quoted: "The noble actions that earn blessings of Allah fastest are obeying the parents and treating well the close relatives and near ones. And actions that fetch torture and agony are disobedience to parents and breaking ties with kith and kin."

She said: "I heard the Prophet (pbuh) describing the enormous blessings that would be showered on *Mujahideen* (those striving in the cause of Islam). I asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, is there anyone other than the *mujahid* among the *ummat* who will get equivalent blessings?' He replied: 'Yes, the one who remembers death twenty times every day will get equivalent blessings.'

Ummul Momineen asked a tailor: "Have you recited *Bismillah* before starting stitching?" "No," replied he. "Then unstitch the whole thing." She advised. This indicates the significance of reciting *Bismilla Hir Rahman Nir Rahim* and points out that a Muslim should commence everything by uttering *Bismillah*.

Once Hazrat Mu'aviah sought advice in a terse manner. She wrote back the valuable quote of the great Prophet which serves as guide for good ruling. It runs as follows:

"The one who seeks the approval and pleasure of Allah by displeasing people is saved from the wrath of the people by Allah (so people cannot harm him), but the one who seeks the pleasure

of the people by displeasing Allah is handed over to the people alone by Allah (so people will dominate over him as they please)."

This indicates how brave and courageous she was even in advising the Caliph of the times. We learn that one should never be afraid of speaking the truth even at the cost of displeasure of people.

She has said that the Prophet of Allah used his right hand for performing Wudu (ablution for the prayer) and for taking food; and he assigned the left hand for cleaning and doing undesirable things." (*Abu Dawood*)

We should also adopt the same practice and teach our children from the start alone to partake food with the right hand alone.

She has said the holy Prophet had said that the prayer that is offered after cleaning the teeth with *miswak* is seventy times better than the one for which *miswak* has not been used. (*Baihaqi*)

Besides these, there are many more Traditions narrated by her. Let Allah help us in practising them.

HAZRAT FATIMA

Hazrat Fatima is also referred as "The Lady of the Paradise." She was the most darling daughter of the most beloved Prophet, who was the Glory of the Universe.

She was born at a time when the message of Allah had found its roots. The whole Arabian peninsula had turned against the religion of Allah. Every individual of Makkah was longing for ending the life of the holy Prophet (pbuh). He and the believers were the target of untold suffering and torture. Amidst such odd circumstances Allah inflicted on her the torment of losing the patronage of mother. She was in her fifth year of childhood that Hazrat Khadija died. This in itself was a shocking experience to undergo. But it was the will of Allah. The demanding responsibility of bringing her up fell on the Prophet alone.

This was at a time when the Prophet (pbuh) was fully engaged in promoting the mission assigned by Allah, the Almighty. He was fully devoted to the cause of spreading Islam, the religion of God. He aspired for wiping out evil and for spreading good. His zeal, enthusiasm and deep attachment to the cause of the spread of Islam earned many enemies. Heavy losses in business were breaking the back. Poverty knocked on the doors. There was no food. On most of the days they had to fast. But even in such hard and harsh circumstances, he never left thanking Allah and endured the hardships bravely.

Obviously the environment had its effect on the young mind of the child and Fatima developed into a sober, chaste, thankful, noble, contented and grateful young girl. She realized the tough path her father had chosen and visualised how stormy and thorny the march on that road would be. She had also learnt that one should not give up courage even amidst most severe and tense circumstances. She could also realize that all personal comforts and pleasures have to be given up to gain the approbation and sanction of the God.

Children do have strong liking for dressing up finely and for adorning themselves with ornaments and jewels. But since childhood alone Hazrat Fatima had no inclination towards such girlish desires. It is reported that in childhood she had to attend a marriage ceremony. She was in very simple dress and did not follow her other sisters who were fully adorned with decorative jewelry.

When she attained puberty, she was married to Hazrat Ali, known as *Sher-e-Khuda*. This marriage was a model for the whole nation. There was no horse, no palki, no band, no music, no dance or pomp of any other kind. It was a very simple ceremony. The dower was also quite ordinary. It consisted of a millstone, leather water container and two earthen pots.

The monetary condition of Hazrat Ali was neither good nor stable. It was a tough life. Mostly they had to starve. But she was such a contented spouse that not a single word of discontentment or complaint appeared on her lips. She often starved herself but fed her husband and children. It is recorded that Hazrat Ali could not earn his daily labour on a day. Both the husband and wife were starving for the past eight pahars i.e., 24 hours. However in the evening he was lucky to get some wage. He bought corn for this money. Hazrat Fatima thanked Allah for it, cleaned the corn, powdered it finely and prepared roti and kept it in front of her husband. He ate to his contentment, after which she sat for eating. Hazrat Ali opined that at that time he could remember the quote of the Prophet that Fatima was the best woman in the world and he thanked the All-provider. Once Hazrat Ali asked her whether any food material was present in the house or not. Hazrat Sayyidah Fatima replied: "Today is the third day that not a grain of any corn is present in the house." Hazrat Ali commented: "O Sayyidah, why did you not tell me this." She replied: "At the farewell, my father had advised me that I must never put you to shame by my demands!"

So she used to work on the grinding stone, bring water in the leather container and would starve for days together. Never would she complain.

Hazrat Abuzar reported that one day the Prophet (pbuh) asked

him to fetch Hazrat Ali. When he went to Hazrat Ali's house, he found Hazrat Fatima working on the grinding-stone with Hazrat Imam Hussain in her lap.

Despite her full attention towards the household work, she was equally devoted towards performing prayers continually. Mostly after Isha (night) prayer, till morning she used to engage herself in praying and crying. This crying was due to fear of Allah. She cried and prayed for others and never for herself. Her supplications were always for the common people.

This involvement in prayer never came in the way of serving Hazrat Ali. She prayed the whole of the night. When there were grains in the house, the food would be ready before time. Once she was very sick. Still she performed wudu (ablution) and started praying. Hazrat Ali got up in the morning and went for prayer in the mosque. When he returned from the mosque, he found her working at the grinding stones. Hazrat Ali said: "O daughter of the Prophet (pbuh), rest yourself for a while, lest the sickness increase." Smilingly she replied: "Both the jobs do not affect the sickness. Both praying Allah and serving you are the panacea (cure) for the sickness. And if perchance I die while performing any one duty, the death will be grand. I prefer dying like this to living a hundred thousand times."

Hazrat Ali was all praise and had no occasion to complain about her not attending to house chores. She attended to all work with full attention to all details and at proper time. Once Hazrat Ali found blisters on her hands due to working on the millstone. He said: "Fatima, you are working on the grindstone everyday. I am also tired of fetching water in leather containers. Some prisoners have been brought to the Prophet (pbuh). You go and request for a maidservant." She presented herself before the Prophet hesitatingly. She described the suffering of both herself and her husband and requested for a maidservant. The Prophet listened to her attentively and then addressed her: "At this moment 400 men are present in the mosque, who have neither a rag to cover themselves nor a grain to consume. My dear, attend to the dignity of being a wife. Let not Ali demand his right on the Day of Judgment."

She did not utter a word, returned home and devoted herself to work more rigorously.

The training under her revered father had helped in imbibing certain grand values. Generosity was one such characteristic. She would starve herself but would feed others. To respond to the request of the needy was her forte (strength).

Once Salman took a beduin to her saying that the Prophet had sent him to her for arranging for his food. Although she was starving for the last three days and both Hasan and Hussain had also slept exhausting their breath because of hunger, she did not like to turn away a needy person from her doors. She took out her shawl, handed it to Hazrat Salman and asked him to sell it and fetch her the food for the money. Hazrat Salman obliged her and bought millet and other things for her. She immediately grinded millet, prepared bread and handed to Hazrat Salman in the name of God. Hazrat Salman suggested that she should keep something for the children. She replied: "It is not advisable to take out something for the children from what has been given in the name of and for the sake of Allah. Please feed the guest. Allah is great. He will make arrangements."

This action of Bibi Fatima is exemplary. There is need to follow her example by our sisters and wives. Let Allah make them as understanding as her, as devoted in their household daily chores and for serving the religion.

Lesson - 6

HAZRAT KHANSAA

Attachment to Islam is an exceptional quality. It changes not only the pattern of life but also the attitude towards life. The transformed person would willingly sacrifice all his personal belongings including property and wealth as well as his own life and that of his progeny even. Such conduct was not confined to men only. Even women were equally enthusiastic in this respect and marched ahead of men.

Hazrat Khansaa was one such woman who came rushing to dedicate her whole life for the cause and service of Islam. During the pre-Islamic paganism period she was a poetess who was writing romantic poetry. Once she embraced Islam, she took to herself the job of inducing and inspiring the various warriors of Islam during striving encounters. This extraordinary change in her was due to embracing Islam.

One such encounter was the battle of Qaadsia. She participated in it along with her four sons. You know it fully well that for a mother the most valuable possession in the world is her children. She loves them madly. She lives for them. She cares for their longevity, prosperity and even puts herself in danger to save them. She never tolerated any harm to any of them. But whenever the question or problem confronts the faith and beliefs of the noble mothers, they never care for their darling children even. They prefer to keep the flag of the religion aloft even at the cost of the life of their children. The encounter at Qaadsia was a tough and deciding conflict. The non-believers wanted to put off the bright light of Islam. It was a tough time. The armies had their camps opposite each other. The swords were shining in the dark of the night. The non-believers were all wrath and vengeance. They were waiting for the day-break to settle the accounts. In this stressful environment Hazrat Khansaa called her sons and addresses them: "My dear sons, you accepted the Faith willingly and migrated on your own. There was no compulsion. By God, as you

have one mother, your father is also one because your mother has never been unfaithful to him. So your pedigree is pure and clean. Thus you are born of a noble and faithful womb. Hence your deeds must be majestic and noble. You know it fully well that Allah blesses profusely all those who wage war against the non-believers. Realizing this fact, you must also know that the other perennial world is far superior and better than this transitory world. Allah, the Exalted exhorts:

"O you who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy; vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and fear God, that You may prosper." [Al-Qur'an — 3:200]

She continued: "Tomorrow there is an open war between Islam and atheism and God willing, if you come out safe in the morning, seeking His assistance with constancy and firmness, you venture into the war field. And when war breaks out and is at its peak, without any fear and hesitation, you jump into the cauldron and show your valour and bravery. When the enemy is in thick of the battle, you aim at the commander of the enemys army and finish him. Let Allah grant you the opportunity to do so. If you survive you are liable to get your share of the plunder and if you do not, let you be honoured on the Resurrection Day, Amen."

She spoke to them so sincerely with utmost devotion and decorum that in the morning when the fighting was at its peak, the four valiant brothers entered the field and fought undaunted heroically and laid down their lives one after another.

Hazrat Khansaa learnt about the death of her four sons. She was told of their bravery and valour in the battlefield. She did not cry. She thanked Allah that they sacrificed their lives to serve the cause of the religion. She took it as the debt that was duly repaid.

Could one imagine the feeling of a widow whose four sons die one after another in the war field? But those who are devoted and loyal to Allah bear all such occasions so calmly that not a tear flows down their cheeks. They consider their possessions, their own life and that of their most dear ones as a Divine trust and when need arises, never hesitate to offer all these with great enduring power and sense of gratitude. How blessed are such personalities!

Lesson - 7

HAZRAT UMME - AMMARA

Earlier to the advent of our beloved Prophet (pbuh), people lived a disorderly life. They were mostly the disciples of the Satan and worshipped idols. The Prophet showed them the straight path and prevented them from idol worship. The people turned hostile for this. They teased, tortured and even made the great Prophet of Allah leave his native place. They did not allow him to lead a peaceful life even there and attacked him several times. The companions of the beloved Prophet were not scared of their tactics. They were devoted followers. They joined together, faced the non-believer enemies (in the battle of Badr) and made them to retreat. The non-believers did not lose heart. They made strong preparations and attacked Medina once again. They challenged the followers of Islam in the field of Uhud. Muslims too joined hands and entered the battlefield to defend the religion of God. They knew fully well that death overtakes a living person only at the appointed hour only.

At critical moments when the religion of Allah is threatened, a true Muslim does not confine himself to his house. The death in a battlefield would elevate him to martyrdom. A martyr is received with great respect by the angels and Allah would be pleased so much that He would consider him/her as alive and not as dead.

So every one – be he/she old, young, man or woman, desired to lay down the life for the cause of Allah's religion and the Messenger of Allah. Hazrat Ummē Ammara , an Ansari woman, was one with intense regard and love for the Prophet (pbuh).

Although Jihad was not compulsory for a woman, the gravity of the situation forced them to reach the battlefield where they exhibited their valour like men.

In the beginning the Muslim warriors enjoyed the upper hand but soon the enemy swelled in number and surrounded every

Muslim soldier from all around. Victory became elusive for the Muslim army. It was a tough situation. Everyone was separated from the other. Even the Prophet was secluded. The enemy took advantage and attacked him. Umme Ammara and Musa'ab bin Umair along with a few others were close by. Hazrat Umme Ammara, even though a woman, played on her life and took the attack of Ibn Qumma the enemy on her. Her arm was severely wounded. But she did not care. It was not the question of her life. Safeguarding the great Prophet (pbuh) was the sole need of the hour. So she took the attack on herself from all sides and fought bravely. Even the Prophet paid tributes to her defending valour as follows:

“Right and left, wherever I turned, I found Umme Ammara fighting in my defence.”

How courageous was this woman! She never cared for her own life. She stood for the religion and Prophet of Allah. She took the enemy attack on her arm and never shirked from her place. She was intoxicated with devotion for the safety of the Prophet. It was this spirit and devotion that had given life to the spread of religion. Even in the present environment, if Muslim women devote themselves in the same spirit to the cause of Islam, the community will keep its head aloft.

Lesson - 8

HAZRAT UMME SULAIM

Rain proves to be a boon for all and sundry. Everybody – the rich or poor, Hindu or Muslim – reaps its benefits. Same was the case with our beloved Prophet, Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). He was the benefactor of all mankind. Whoever came in contact with him became an epitome of kindness, righteousness, and steadfastness.

One of the Prophet's companions was Hazrat Abu Talha. His wife, Umme Sulaim, was a very righteous lady. She would keep patience and fortitude in odd circumstances. Smilingly she would face hardships and sufferings. This is why she was held in high esteem even by the Prophet.

Abu Talha and Umme Sulaim were blessed with a lovely and beautiful son. One day the child fell sick and a few days later passed away. At the time of his death, Abu Talha was not present there at home.

The mother was of course grief-stricken over the child's demise. Yet, she took it as Allah's will. That Allah had brought her child in this world and then He took him back was her only belief. Allah does as He wills. The Faith (*Iman*) requires us to submit to the will of Allah. Thus, we must be patient. We must not wail.

Umme Sulaim suffered the affliction with tremendous dignity and fortitude. And did not forsake her domestic chores. She thought if she wailed, Allah would get angry. And her husband would be upset the whole night. Thus, she was calm and composed.

A little later, Abu Talha returned home. First of all he enquired about the well-being of the child. Umme Sulaim, evading the question, served the meal to him. When he had dined, the devoted wife asked, "If a person lends somebody anything for a few days and demands for the same after the stipulated time, will the

borrower be justified in refusing him?" Abu Talha said, "No. Not at all. There is no scope for denial." Hearing this, Umme Sulaim said, "Allah had entrusted to us a lovely child. He has taken him back. Be patient. And arrange for his funeral." Abu Talha loved his child too much. But with the consolatory words of his wife, he got strength to overcome his grief.

You know how much a mother loves her child. The fact is that a home sans a child paints a bleak picture. When a child passes away, a pall of gloom descends on the home. In this situation women wail, abandon eating, and do not change their dress. But Umme Sulaim resigned herself to Allah's will and consoled her husband with words of great wisdom. Islam, the religion of Allah, inculcated this quality in her.

There is another exceptional story related to this lady and her husband which shows that Islam brought about a tremendous change in the believers. Even Allah, the Exalted has referred to their hospitality in His Book.

A man came to the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and said that he was famished. The Prophet enquired if there was any eatable in his house so that it might be offered to the guest. But the Prophet was informed that there was nothing, as usual. Then, the Prophet appealed to his companions who were gathered around him. He said: "Allah will be merciful to him who feeds this man." Abu Talha was first to respond: "O Prophet! Let him be in my hospitality." Thus, Abu Talha took the guest to his home. His wife, Umme Sulaim, let him know that there was nothing, except some food enough for the children. Abu Talha said: "With us is a guest of the Prophet. He has to be fed. Therefore, let the children be hungry. Persuade them into sleeping. And serve the food to the guest." The righteous and submissive wife acted accordingly. Note it, on one hand there is love for children and on the other is a guest. They are feeding the guest by keeping their children hungry. Such are the pious men.

When the food was served to the guest, he requested Abu Talha to join him. On his insistence, Abu Talha sat beside him. But Abu Talha's intelligent wife, thinking that the food was

insufficient for more than one person, blew the candle out on the pretext of mending it. Darkness prevailed over there. The guest started to eat. Taking advantage of the darkness, Abu Talha just pretended to and let the guest eat to his fill. Abu Talha and his family did not eat, though they were happy to feed the guest of their beloved Prophet.

When Abu Talha went to Prophet Muhammad the next morning, the Prophet said: "O Abu Talha! You people won the pleasure of Allah with your good conduct. Allah narrated your conduct before the angels by saying: Look! How they are trying to please Me!" Then the verse revealed to the Prophet:

"Those who entered the city and the Faith before them love those who flee unto them for refuge, and find in their breasts no need for that which has been given them, but prefer (the fugitives) above themselves though poverty become their lot. And whoso is saved from his own avarice – such are they who are successful." (Al-Hashr 59:9)

How pious were these people that Allah Himself praised them! We should try our level best to win the pleasure of Allah by emulating them. May Allah help us!

ASMA BINT ABU BAKR

Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique was the first Caliph who was known for his devotion to the great Prophet (pbuh). Hazrat Asma was his daughter. She was quite a simple lady. She was married to Hazrat Zubair who was not at all rich. He possessed a camel and a horse and nothing else. It was very difficult for him to maintain the house. Hazrat Asma had to attend to all work at the house starting from kneading the dough and cooking the food to feeding the animals. She was so noble and grateful to Allah that she never complained about anything. She believed in the saying of the great Prophet that "One who seeks endurance, gets endurance; one who seeks sincerity, gets sincerity; and one who seeks contentment, gets contentment."

Hazrat Zubair and Hazrat Asma had a son, Abdullah. He was very obedient and devoted to the parents and to Islamic cause. His mother had instructed him never to compromise with evil. He followed the instruction and laid down his life for this. The incident is as follows:

Abdullah Bin Zubair had to lead an army against Hajjaj. The royal army surrounded him such that nearly ten thousand soldiers left him and moved to the other side. Even his two sons Hamza and Khabeeb also left him. In his helplessness, he came to his mother and described his position. "My two sons have also moved over to Hajjaj. Very few royal members are with me. They cannot face the royal army for long. If I submit myself, I will get whatever I demand. Please tell me, mother, what shall I do?"

Now look at Hazrat Asma. It was quite evident that her son was quite helpless before the well-equipped and well-trained army of Hajjaj. She knew that the enemy was after her son, Abdullah. Her love for the son did not come in the way. She never advised him to hide or to seek forgiveness. Instead she asked him to sacrifice his life for truth. She said: "My dear son, you know

yourself best. If you think that you are on the right path and that you are inviting people to adopt the true path, then hold to yourself. Be patient. Many of your companions have already laid down their lives for the cause of religion. Do not yield and be a toy in the hands of Bani Ummaiah. But if you feel that you have allowed all this to happen for seeking a position in the world, then you are the worst person. You have not only killed yourself, but unnecessarily allowed your companions also to lose their lives. But if you think you are upholding truth, then laying down the life in the path of truth is certainly superior. If this life has to end, let it end in the path of Allah. You will not achieve eternity by weakening the religion."

This was a great lesson taught by the mother to the son. Sacrificing life in the cause of Truth and achieving Allah's pleasure is the first duty of a true Muslim. Faith in Allah and His religion attains authenticity when one values it more than one's own life. Only the noble and pious people could attain the status of martyrdom. Abdullah bin Zubair laid down his life for upholding Truth by obeying his mother. The aged mother also accepted the tragedy with great patience. Even after losing the support, she never hesitated to speak the truth before the despot Hajjaj.

It is recorded in history that after sending Abdullah bin Zubair to gallows, Hajjaj approached Hazrat Asma and said: "Your son was spreading irreligiosity in the house of God. He was punished by God severely for it." She readily retorted: "You are telling a lie. My son was not at all irreligious. He was loyal and obedient to the parents. He fasted and offered even the *Tahajjud* prayer regularly. In fact you have been brutal and ruthless to him. By Allah, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) has told us that two liars would be born in the tribe of Saqeef and the second will be worse than the first, because he would cause wreck and destruction. You have already seen the end of the first of the liars from Saqeef tribe who claimed to be a Prophet, he was Musailma And you are the second one!"

This incident reveals how bold and courageous was Hazrat Asma. It also indicates that women of the earliest era were not only engaged in the upkeep of the house but were ever ready to

work for the cause of religion through their words. They were never afraid of facing the despots and oppressors. They set examples even for men. Let Allah shower His blessings on these noble souls!

Lesson - 9

HAZRAT FATIMA BINT KHATTAB

A person becomes a Muslim when he believes in One God and acts according to His instructions. The belief in one God is complete only when one worships none other than Allah (one God), fears and seeks help only from Him. When others torture or abuse him for his belief in one God, he never complains. Instead he accepts all this as the will of God. He knows fully well that a day will soon come when people will listen to what he is advocating and practising. His words will be like fragrance of a flower that captures all and benefits all.

You must have heard of Hazrat Umar. He was the second Caliph. He came to the fold of Islam quite late. Much earlier to him, his sister Hazrat Fatima and her husband had embraced Islam. But they had kept this fact as a secret. Particularly from Hazrat Umar. They were afraid of him and said their prayers also in hiding. These were early times. Islam had not spread much. Very few persons had come to its fold. The non-believers tortured these Muslims rigorously. They thrashed the converts, made them lie naked on hot sands of the vast desert, stitched them inside camel skins and suffocated them with smoke. But the religion of Allah gave the converts such unshakable strength that they tolerated all these courageously and never gave up their religion. This strong attachment and firm attitude of Muslims enraged the non-believers of Makkah. They decided to put off that source alone from where the light was being spread on all sides. They wanted to kill the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself. They consulted among themselves and decided to assign the task to Umar.

Umar was a young man at that time. He was a great swordsman and was known for his bravery. He accepted the assignment and with a naked sword in hand he set out to fulfill his task. On the

way someone informed him that before killing Prophet Muhammad he should clean his own house. He was informed that his sister- and brother-in-law had already accepted Islam. Hearing this he was infuriated. He changed his route and reached his sister's residence.

He knocked on the door. At that time his sister and her husband were reciting the Holy Qur'an. When he learnt about it, he turned red with rage and started beating them severely. He scolded them and thrashed them like a mad man and demanded that they should give up their new Faith. But once the heart gets lighted up with the faith in one God, there would be no room for dark infidelity. One who believes that Allah is his Master and he has to appear before Him would never care for the cruelty and atrocities of mortals. So when Hazrat Umar demanded them to give up their new religion the sister retorted in strong words that whatever might happen they would never forsake the religion of Islam. This brave rejoinder made Hazrat Umar to pause and think. He wondered what magic did the message carry that my sister and others who take to this new Faith never give it up and stick to it so devotedly and strongly. He thought there must be some hidden truth in it. So he asked for the copy of the Glorious Qur'an, cleaned himself and read it. And lo, the truth dawned on him. He immediately presented himself before the Prophet (pbuh) and embraced Islam reciting: "There is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger."

How courageous and valiant was Hazrat Fatima bint Khattab that under her influence could a companion like Hazrat Umar come to the fold of the universal religion of Islam!
